

# DIARY NOTES

18/5/1914: The Boys' Training Farm and Town Cadets entertained for the Commanding Officers District Review. Two companies Boys' Training Farm Cadets with Boys' Training Farm Brass Band and Pipers.

15/1/1916: Twenty-five boys were given free season tickets for the Levin Coronation Swimming Baths in gratitude for their band acting as the town band for many years.

25/4/1916: The Boys' Training Farm Band and Cadets paraded for Levin's first observance of Anzac Day.

20/6/1939: There was a riot at the Weraroa Boys' Training Farm. Some of the boys rioted and among other incidents some of the buildings were set on fire. A police squad consisting of a sergeant and four constables were sent from Wellington. By a management decision the squad was withdrawn the next day but Constables Turvey and Scanlon were recalled the following day although there were no more incidents.

A favourite place for truant boys from the centre was the bush behind Shirley Hayes' home in Buller Road. Many times police searched the property during night hours. Mr Hayes told the police, "Search when you like — but don't wake us up. Let us sleep."

Hokio Boys' School was built and opened in the early 1930s for boys of school age committed to the Weraroa Boys' Training Farm. It apparently had closed at some time prior to 1942.

19/11/1942: The Wellington Hospital Board took over the Otaki Health Camp as a hospital because with the influx of war wounded patients, the Wellington Hospital was overcrowded. The Health Camp moved to the former Boys' Training School at Hokio Beach. Earlier a beach resort had been operating in the school.

27/7/1944: The Chronicle reported that the school at Hokio Beach for the Boys' Training Centre was to be reopened.



□ Boys gardening in front of "Clematis Cottage" the home of the Williams at the Boys' Training Farm in Kimberley Road in 1913. Mr Williams is wearing the white hat. His wife and son Raymond are in the doorway of the home. The cottage has since been demolished.

# BOYS WILL BE

**THE Weraroa Boys Training Farm was established in 1906.**

The land selected was in Kimberley Road on the south side extending from the railway line to Arapaepae Road and to the south about halfway to McLeavey Road. The land was in heavy bush except that millable logs had been taken out.

### Big influence

Among one of the first workers on the project was Mr John Hayfield who later was to have a big influence on the music scene of Levin as bandsman and conductor for the Levin Municipal Brass Band. He was a player of

the piano, violin, many band instruments and a church organist of long standing. Orchestral playing was another of his interests and he was a composer of marches and other musical works. He played in the orchestras for the King's Theatre, the old town hall where the taxi office is now c. 1914-20, in the People's Theatre c. 1920-26 (where Write Price is now) and in the De Luxe Theatre (now the Regent) 1926-29 in the days of silent pictures. He was also a music teacher.

On the new block of land he was employed clearing the land of the probably burnt over

**HISTORIC LEVIN by Francis Corrison Swanwick of the Horowhenua Historical Society**

bush and laying out the grounds. He remained on the staff when the institution was opened.

The institution was for training for farm work the boys who were sent from the Justice Courts, orphans and boys from unsatisfactory homes. The first manager was Major Burlinson from a British military background.

The farm specialised in milking herds, Frie-

sians being the main herd, with smaller herds of Ayrshire and Guernsey. The milking shed was said to be the largest in the Southern Hemisphere. This was a three sided shed with 80 bails. About 90 cows were milked first by hand and by the 1920s by machine.

About 300 pigs were kept in the piggery to eat the copious supplies of curd from the skim milk. At 5am 25 boys were assembled, 18 were detailed to the cowshed, four to the piggery for feeding and three to the slaughter house. The method of milking was extremely slow compared with the fast technique used today. This early morning work was done by 7am in time for breakfast.

### Discipline

From the beginning discipline was extremely harsh, being the order of the day in institutions. Corporal punishment was common especially for escaping. The institution was open with security only in the dormitories.

A new attendant was so shocked at the corporal punishment that he contacted two Ministers of the Cabinet of the new Government about 1936. They came and investigated the conditions at the farm and caused the discipline to be considerably eased.

Mr Hayfield taught some of the boys to

play brass band instruments so a band was formed. Church parade was held every Sunday. Major Burlinson would lead the march with the band following playing all the way. When Levin was reached, detachments would fall out at the church of their denomination.

This must have ceased before 1920 as my memory of seeing the marches is very vague. Mr Hayfield composed two marches for the band, the Boys' Training Farm and Weraroa which the Levin Municipal Band still possessed a few years back.

Mr Hayfield left his employment at the farm in 1911 but still went back weekly to help with the band until 1922. He played second cornet in the Levin Municipal Band until his eighty fifth year.

The farm had an extensive orchard growing many varieties of fruit. Cheese was made at some time of its existence. Haymaking was a big job in the summer, using the laborious methods of the time involving much hand forking.

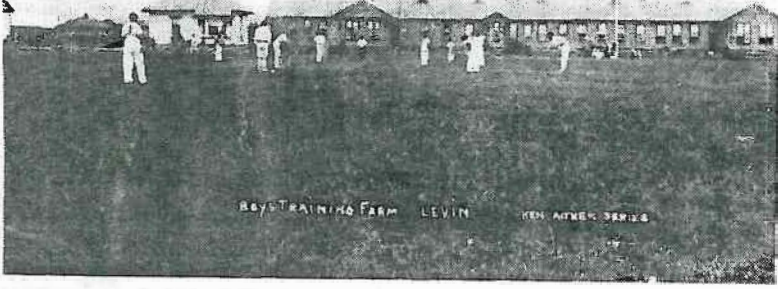
In the earlier days the boys put on concerts in the Salvation Army Hall in Bath Street. I have been told there were some fine instrument players and singers among the boys, probably due to the influence of Mr Hayfield.

Mr Marriott followed Major Burlinson as manager, probably about 1920. Then in 1925 Mr Donaghue followed, then Mr Hercock until about 1936.

Mr Charles Peak was then manager coinciding with the new era of

Continued over ♦

**HISTORY**



□ Playing cricket at the Levin Boys' Training farm in about 1920.



□ Main entrance to the Boys' Training Farm in Kimberley Road in 1920. It is now the westerly entrance.

# BOYS!

## Training farm in Kimberley Road

more humane discipline. Kohitere's Camp Peak in the upper Gladstone Road is named after him.

Many buildings had been erected over the years, many of them of an ornate style of yesterday. Some of these still exist at Kimberley Hospital. The farm helped with assistance in the Levin community in many ways as does Kohitere today. Playing sport was encouraged for the boys. The large sports ground still exists at Kimberley Hospital on the road frontage in front of the old buildings at the western end where the original entrance leads in. Sport was played in at least friendly games with Levin teams.

I was roped in once when young to fill in a rugby team. The only time I got the ball I ran the wrong way and nearly scored a try in our own goal line, only being stopped by the yells of my teammates.

A swimming pool existed in the grounds from the early days, at least by about 1920.

During the fund-raising campaign last year for building a therapeutic pool at Kimberley Hospital it was printed that the hospital inherited the outdoor pool from the Air Force Station. Some

people read it as if the Air Force built this pool.

The Boys' Training Farm always had excellent pedigree stock and was prominent in winning awards at agricultural shows. During the 1930s era it was recorded that many awards were won. One Friesian bull, Totara Pontiac Vulcan, won the New Zealand Championship Award at the Palmerston North show in 1934. The Berkshire and Tamworth pigs won many awards. Probably many other premier awards were won which history does not record.

### Rejected

In 1939 the Air Force took over the institution for a station for the entire intake of Air Force recruits. The Boys' Training Farm had had a block of land at C.D. Farm Road fronting Hokio Beach Road. The 800 acre block of land which the Central Development Experimental Farm had occupied since 1894 was subdivided in the late 1920s into private leasehold farms.

This C.D. Farm became redundant when the site was rejected for Massey College. A block of buildings was hurriedly built on the Boys' Training Farm block in 1939 to

accommodate the institution. Mr Wilson Grant was the last manager at Kimberley Road and he effected the changeover.

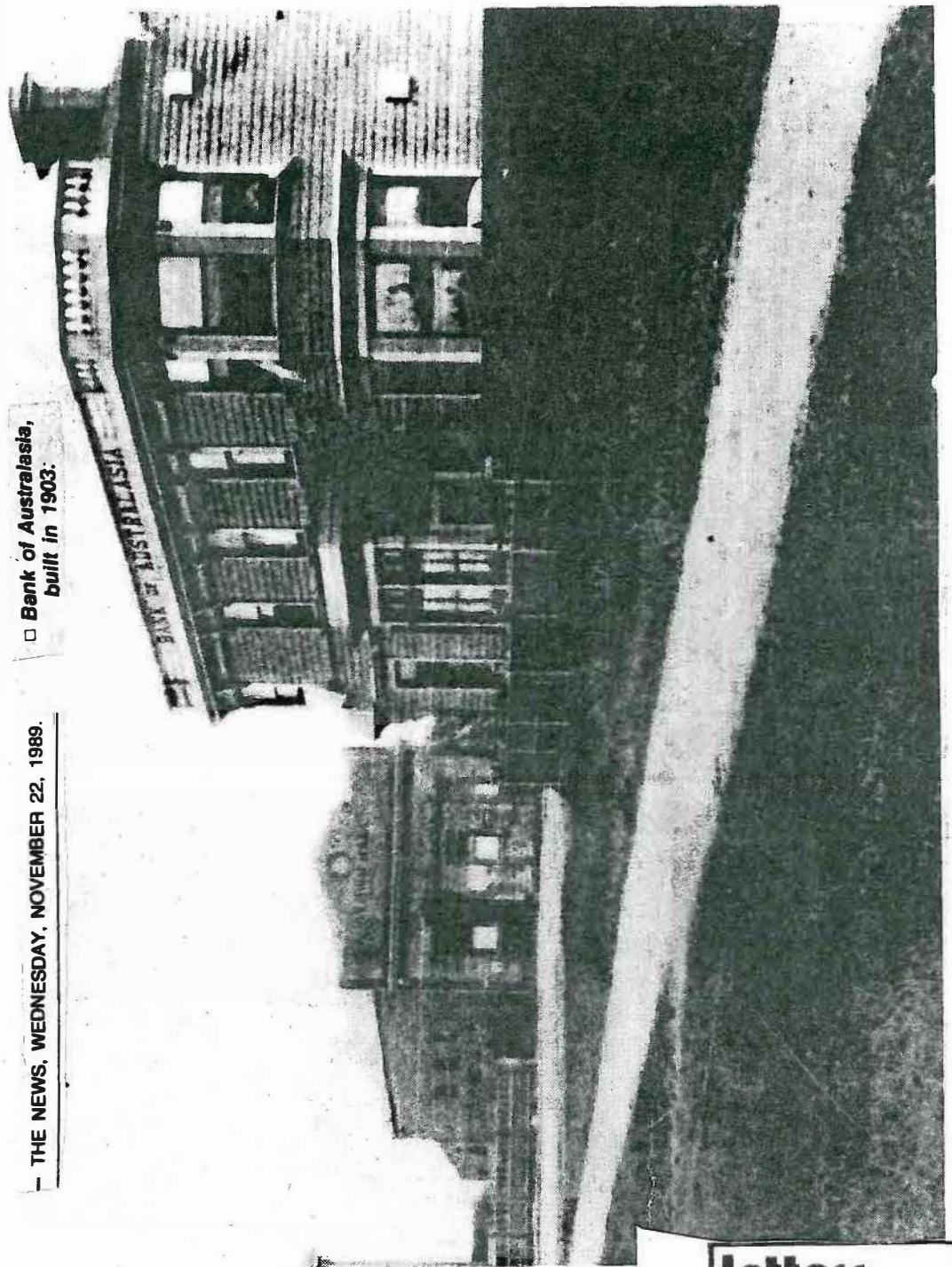
When the new buildings were being erected I worked on them for a few weeks. Bodell's of Palmerston North were the contractors.

The first morning at 10am, Mr Bob Skilton Snr started walking towards his bike. The foreman said, "Where are you going?" Bob replied, "To get my smoko." The foreman said, "There is no smoko on this job" and there was none while I was there.

The Air Force Station closed down in 1944 and the property became a war asset retained until 1945 when it was transferred to the Health Department and became the present Kimberley Hospital and Training School.

In the mid 1940s Mr Cliff Dorne leased the former Boys' Training Farm pasture land. He used part of the original cowshed. The 80 bails still had the milking machines fitted. The part he used had walk through bails but the remainder had the original back out bails.

The new institution was renamed The Boys' Training Centre and later renamed Kohitere Training Centre. Kohitere Creek flows from the McLeavey Road area across C.D. Farm Road and into the Arawata Swamp.



□ Bank of Australasia, built in 1903.

— THE NEWS, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1989.

BELONGS TO STORY NEXT PAGE

### letters

## Kohitere CHRONICLE land

13/9/1995

Sir, In the individualisation of the tribal land Warena Hunia, the hereditary chief of the Mua-U-Poko tribe was awarded 800 acres of land in the 1880s off what is now Hokio Beach Road, the site of the now Kohitere. The Government bought the land in 1894 for a state farm.

In the division of the tribal land there was much argument as to who got certain blocks of land. Many decisions had to be heard in the Maori Land Court.

When the Minister came to take possession of the land he was blocked by a group of Maoris who also claimed the land. The Minister came back with police from Wellington. The group were persuaded to send a deputation to the Premier. One Maori said "You have taken my land. You can have my clothes" and started taking them off. He was ejected and the deputation was told that the land had been bought and it was finished with.

CORRIE SWANWICK  
Levin

### DIFFY NOT DUFFY

CONSTABLE Gordon Duffy referred to in last week's historic feature was in fact Constable Gordon Duff. Ed.